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ASSIGNMENT COVER PAGE

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“Calling noise a nuisance is like calling smog an inconvenience. Noise must be considered a hazard to the health of people everywhere.” Dr. William H. Stewart, former Surgeon General of the United States, (Schmid, 1997). Noise Pollution, also called Sound Pollution, is sound that is man-made; may employ, but are not limited to the uses of various sound amplifying devices (Laws of Trinidad & Tobago – Environmental Management, 2008). Noise pollution exists because laws are not enforced to control its harmful effects; this is largely due to a lack of implementation of existing laws.

Noise Pollution infringes on the rights of the individual. Article 19 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers*”. Most can argue that to observe Noise Pollution regulations will affect their own right to freedom. However, not to observe these very regulations will, to a greater extent affect the right of the victims of Noise Pollution. As is explicitly understood, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was never forged with the intention of infringing on another person’s rights, as is clearly stated in Article 29 (2) of the same Declaration of Human Rights. Thus, the medium for recognizing Noise Pollution as a “*right to freedom of opinion*” should never be accepted, it should be rejected with all intensities.

Furthermore, one popular debate over noise pollution issue is that it reflects in one’s culture; such as the assertion that the vuvuzelas are ingrained in the South African culture. (BBC Sport, 2010). A similar argument will be made for Trinidad & Tobago given our own cultural customs with the traditions of Carnival. Even though, we acknowledge the fact that culture will ultimately be affected, this cannot be the forerunner for blatant behaviour to flourish. Culture

must never become the escape perpetrators hide behind in pretence. There must be common ground that will allow both sides to compromise for the public health.

Noise Pollution carries with it devastating health effects. Such effects are but not limited to Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL); increased stress levels, which ultimately leads to increased aggression, fatigue, coronary heart diseases, foetal abnormalities and ulcers. Another health risk posed by noise pollution is lack of concentration as suggested by players in the recently concluded FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa. It is the players' argument that they were unable to concentrate on the match being played as the noise created by vuvuzelas, a South African plastic musical instrument, was exceedingly loud. BBC Sport reported that the sound emitted from the vuvuzelas was in excess of a drum's one hundred and twenty decibels (BBC Sport, 2010). Players dubbed this as the reason the game did not go in their favour, with the French saying this was the reason they were unable to defeat Uruguay, which left them goalless and at the beginning of their journey home.

A lack of concentration is not in the least the most detrimental effect of noise pollution, on equal footing, there is sleep exhaustion, which affects everything in our lives the very next day. Proper sleep habits are directly linked to the stress of the preceding day. In addition, sleep habits, stress, aggression, cardiovascular diseases and hypertension all interlock with each other; in some instances, where one triggers the next, like a domino track. This greatly increases the effects of noise pollution by a far greater extent; an extent that most are seemingly unaware.

Preliminary research undertaken by the RANCH study (Road traffic and Aircraft Noise exposure and children's Cognition and Health) "indicate that reading comprehension, recognition memory, cued recall, and prospective memory are impaired in those exposed to aircraft noise but not impaired by traffic noise". It should be noted that the American Speech-Language-Hearing

Association has acknowledged that no recent studies were done on children with traffic noise, although most studies were conducted with aircraft noise (Finegold, Job, de Jong, & Griefahn, 2004).

With most nations acknowledging noise pollution as a persistent and pervasive problem, the European Union has taken a daring step further with implementing Noise Abatement laws. There is no significant noise pollution legislation that deals with noise pollution on the national level. As it stands the legislation of Trinidad & Tobago does not consider the noise effects of the business environment or social events on the community at large. According to the laws of Trinidad & Tobago, Regulation 49 of Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act chapter 48:50 as amended by act 5 of 2010, *Playing musical/noisy instrument in vehicle*. This charge carries with it a miniature fine of One Thousand Dollars. The law must be amended to include other incidences of noise pollution that are becoming a norm for most other communities; while there must be consultation that monitors the range of noisy environments.

As it stands the Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad & Tobago (EMA) does not adequately deal with the pervasive problem of noise pollution. Granted, there are currently fees for acquiring the necessary variations to The Noise Pollution Rules 2001 (Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad & Tobago, 2007); however it should be noted there are no specific noise pollution charges/ fines in place for dealing with perpetrators of noise pollution. As a result, businesses continue to flourish while depleting the health of a nation, with no recourse whatsoever.

Furthermore, the fees for acquiring variations from the Environmental Management Authority of Trinidad & Tobago (EMA) are rather small application fee of Two Hundred and Fifty Trinidad & Tobago Dollars, with a renewal fee of Two Thousand Dollars for the first year

and Five Thousand in excess of the first year. These sums are easily accessible by many event organisers or other business interests. In addition to fees structure, there should also be other regulation such as venue requirements and equipment. These variations must be monitored so that incidences of noise pollution are lessened in an effort to maintain environmental awareness and public health.

It should be borne in mind that noise pollution carries with it devastating effects on health such as Noise Induced Hearing Loss, stress, aggression, fatigue, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, sleep exhaustion, foetal abnormalities, ulcers (Betbeze & Hill), (Schmid,1997). Noise pollution exists because laws are not enforced to control its harmful effects. This is largely due to a lack of implementation of existing laws; however this is often because there is no clear path to curb this environmental disease.

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